

A photograph of two young women, likely students, in a kitchen setting. They are wearing white chef coats and dark blue aprons with white vertical stripes. They are also wearing matching striped chef hats. The woman on the left is smiling broadly at the camera. The woman on the right is also smiling and is focused on peeling a small crustacean, possibly a prawn, over a large metal bowl filled with similar seafood. In the foreground, there is a blue cutting board and a metal tray with a red and white checkered liner containing several peeled prawns. The background shows a typical kitchen environment with shelves, stacks of white bowls, and various kitchen equipment. The overall tone is bright and positive, suggesting a hands-on learning experience in the seafood industry.

seafish

The world is your oyster

Attracting young people to the seafood sector

Young talent is vital to the future of the seafood industry but it's a hard sell and fewer people are being attracted than ever before. Many don't know what types of job are available, while others have negative perceptions of the industry as a whole.

To better understand attitudes and the barriers that might exist, Seafish recently commissioned research to find out what young people (between the ages of 16 and 18) thought about careers in the seafood sector.

The findings were quite alarming. The next generation of school leavers see jobs in seafood as low-skilled, unexciting and focused on handling fish. As a result, the industry faces a challenge to address misconceptions and offer a more attractive proposition to attract young people.

This guide takes a look at the research findings and highlights the most effective ways to reach young people, including the important audience-specific messages to focus on.

"It's just the idea of doing the same thing all day long, stinking of fish. No one would say it was their dream job, would they?"

Market research participant



The research **Fishing for information**



What young people want

We interviewed 16 to 18 year olds from Aberdeen, Hull and Exeter. Across all ages and academic ability, male and female, and including some who were thinking about university.

Whether trying to encourage more young people into the industry as a whole or advertising for an individual role, the findings provided some important insight on what messages to focus on — and what young people actually want.

Starting with individual motivations, young people (not surprisingly) want varied and interesting jobs. They want opportunities for promotion and development, decent pay and the chance to work with other young people.

In theory, that's all easy to demonstrate. The seafood sector is thriving, with a wide range of jobs that offer career progression and good pay — and don't all involve handling fish. Furthermore, at a time when going to university doesn't always guarantee good career prospects, the seafood industry can offer apprenticeships and opportunities to 'earn while you learn'.

The trouble is, these messages are not reaching the people that matter.

"I look at my mum and dad and they both hate their jobs. I want a job that I look forward to every day, where I'm proud of what I'm doing."

Market research participant

Top 5 things young people look for in a job:



What young people think

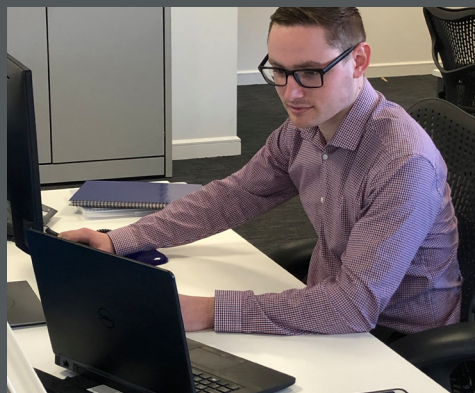
Across all ages, gender and academic ability in our sample group, the responses were very similar. In Aberdeen, Hull and Exeter, the seafood sector was little known or understood and, because most young people struggled to imagine what kind of jobs it might include, few had considered a career.

The most common jobs mentioned were fisherman, fishmonger, chef and fish factory worker — but they were largely perceived as being smelly, dirty and possibly dangerous. Even those who had considered a career as a chef, did not want to work exclusively with fish or shellfish, while working in a fish and chip shop was not seen as a good long-term prospect. Some were also concerned at what other people would think.

Of the small number who were open-minded, all were boys who had considered a job on a fishing vessel.

“I’ve never thought about it (the seafood sector) but I’m expecting that the jobs will be hard and dirty, and you would stink. It’s not exactly grabbing me.”

Market research participant





Top 5 turn-offs in the seafood sector:



**Handling
fish**



**Smelly, dirty
or dangerous**



**Limited
prospects**



**Peer
perceptions**



Low pay

The challenges **Swimming against the tide**

So, what are the biggest barriers to attracting young people into the seafood industry? Quite simply, the sector is not front of mind for most young people today — not helped by the fact that most don't eat fish or shellfish.

As a result, there's a lack of understanding about the jobs available — with any 'understanding' fuelled by misconceptions that the sector is dominated by mostly older men, that it's in decline and that jobs are low paid, low-skilled and unpleasant. Schools and colleges don't always help by encouraging university, and portraying apprenticeships and learning on the job as fall-back options for school leavers.

The research also revealed that many of these misconceptions are self-perpetuating. Young people sought information on future careers from websites recommended by their schools, and only researched jobs they had heard of.

Here, the response is clear: the seafood industry and local employers should engage with teachers and career advisors, attend careers fairs and look for opportunities to develop closer links with individual schools.

There is a need to promote fish specifically to young people as a healthy, tasty and sustainable food.





Top 5 seafood jobs young people have heard of:



Fisherman



Fishmonger



Chef



Fish factory worker



Fish fryer

The campaign materials

Baiting the hook

Our research was based on various campaign materials that Seafish has developed: a 'career map' showing different types of job options within the industry; an infographic showing career opportunities and benefits; and a video.

The materials produced mixed responses, from surprise (at the number of job types available) and curiosity (to find out more) to scepticism (Travel the world) and nervousness (Start your own business). Nevertheless, there is much to learn from student feedback.

"I'm quite shocked. I didn't think there were as many jobs, and they don't all involve handling fish. It's given me something to think about."

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

4 paths into the seafood industry



FISHERMAN

The heart and soul of the seafood industry. Young men and women who want to become a deckhand need to be physically fit and undertake mandatory safety training. There's also an option to do an apprenticeship which is available for those who want a more in depth learning experience. Once complete the candidate will be primed for quick career progression and may even make skipper one day.

"I STARTED WHEN I WAS 15 ON £70 PER DAY AND AS YOU PROGRESS IT JUST GETS BETTER AND BETTER."
Ben Bengay, once the youngest skipper in the country.

SALARY

Fishermen usually start on the profits from the sale of the catch. There is opportunity to earn good money but this depends on three factors: how good the fishing is, where you're fishing and the quality of your boat.



FISHMONGER

Fishmongers are extremely skilled individuals who prepare and sell fish to the public. There are intermediate and advanced level apprenticeships for those interested in a career with senior members able to undertake professional qualifications. Great physical stamina and good hand-eye coordination are helpful.

"I STARTED AT A YOUNG AGE AND NOW, AT 33, I'M OPENING MY OWN SHOP."
George Hooper, youngest ever winner of the National Federation of Fishcraft Competition.

SALARY

Initially more than the minimum wage for a 40 hour week rising to £20-25,000 per year depending on skills and experience and as much as £30,000 for a senior position such as a manager.



FISH FILER

Fish fillets are the most recognisable face of the industry but there's more to running a fish and chip shop than just serving the food. There are one and two day training courses available for fish frying skills and three day courses in management as well. There's also health and safety and food hygiene to consider too. Not to mention team management and creating an excellent product for your customers.

"YOU NEED ACCOUNTANTS, YOU NEED MARKETING, YOU NEED PR, YOU NEED EVERYTHING! IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT FISH AND CHIPS."
Bonny Ritchie, runs Simpson's Fish and Chips in Cheltenham.

SALARY

£10 per hour for an experienced fillet. Experienced chefs can earn around £25,000 or more if you run your own restaurant.



SECTOR SPECIALIST

Have you ever considered a career as an analyst or a marine biologist? What about a commercial manager or working in business development? How about marketing and PR? There are so many sector roles that it's a good idea to speak to your local college or university about the diverse range of HNC, HND and degree-level qualifications available.

"THE FISH INDUSTRY IS VIBRANT, IT'S GROWING AND THERE'S OPPORTUNITIES TO DO ALMOST ANY ROLE YOU COULD THINK OF."
Emma Moffat, a fish buyer for Icelandic Seafoods.

SALARY

Junior roles start at £15-16,000 quickly progressing to beyond £30,000 by 25.

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT CAREERS IN THE SEAFOOD INDUSTRY AND THE RANGE OF TRAINING AVAILABLE VISIT
www.seafish.org/training

Lessons to learn

1. The young people (all heavy social media users) responded best to an interactive, highly visual approach using a mix of media
2. Content should be punchy and informal and make no assumption about level of knowledge or understanding
3. Information about what jobs entail should be specific and detailed
4. Real-life case studies are a good way of reinforcing positive messages

"I don't mind the idea of working with fish if it pays okay. My mates would say stuff but if I was earning good money, I wouldn't mind."

"That all sound really appealing – much more exciting than I thought – like the possibilities are limitless."

Market research participants

If you'd like some of our promotional careers' materials to use when promoting your own job opportunities, please contact: seafish@seafish.co.uk

Top 5 sources of job information:



School



Parents



Online



Social media



TV



The conclusion **Steering the right course**

It's a cliché of course, but if you want to catch the best fish you need the right bait. The seafood industry is struggling to attract bright and ambitious school leavers because young people don't see it as an interesting and rewarding career.

The challenge for the industry and individual employers is to break down misconceptions with positive messages about the wide range of jobs, good pay and progression opportunities, and the chance to be part of a thriving and sustainable industry.

These messages can best be delivered by having stronger links to schools, attending career fairs, producing clear and compelling information (including highly visual material, engaging job adverts and real-life case studies) and engaging with young people online and on social media.



**Top 5 messages
for young people:**



**Seafood
sector is
thriving**



**Wide
range of
interesting
jobs**



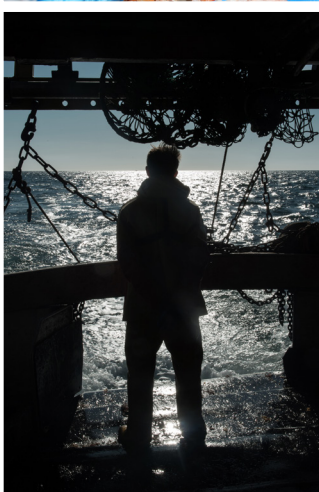
**Good pay and
promotion
opportunities**



**'It's not
all about
handling
fish'**



**Earn while
you learn**



This is a mock example of an advert for a seafood industry job. To help encourage younger applicants, the description should sound inspirational and exciting.

Your logo
or name

A great career in seafood... no catch

We're an award-winning smokehouse and artisan food outlet. You'll be an ambitious school-leaver eager to learn.

Following a period of strong growth, we're looking to recruit a new member of our production team to learn about our business – from sea to plate.

We'll offer in-house training and an attractive salary, with opportunities for promotion for the right candidate.

If you have a passion for wholesome food, and are able to work in a fast-paced environment preparing seafood and packaging orders, we'd love to hear from you.

Just send us your CV and a short covering letter explaining why you'd be our 'catch of the day'.

Apply to: careers@seafoodcompany.co.uk

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For further details and
guidance about the
information in this
report, please contact:
seafish@seafish.co.uk


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